

PAPERS ON CLIMATOLOGY IN RELATION TO AGRICULTURE, TRANSPORTATION, WATER RESOURCES, ETC.

A CARELESS STATEMENT.

Under the above heading there appeared in the Monthly Weather Review for March, 1911, page 362, certain notes by J. Warren Smith, professor of meteorology, Columbus, Ohio, in regard to the growing of peaches in Michigan and northern Kansas, extracted from a book on "Climate and Meteorology of Australia" by Commonwealth Meteorologist H. A. Hunt, Melbourne, Australia.

The correspondence resulting from the publication of these notes is herewith reproduced in order that no reflection shall be cast upon the scientific reputation of Mr. Hunt, the author of the last-mentioned publication.

Letter from Mr. Hunt to the Chief, United States Weather Bureau.

MELBOURNE, September 28, 1911.

DEAR COLLEAGUE: In your Monthly Weather Review, March number, just to hand, appears a libelous note, page 362, by J. Warren Smith, section director, headed "A Careless Statement," which if not replied to is likely to reflect upon my scientific reputation.

As an officer in charge of a scientific department it should have been clear to him that no statement in print over my name would appear without emanating from some authentic source of information, and also that no scientist would publish alleged facts from the unsupported source of newspaper columns.

My source of information was the report of the Meteorological Congress held in Chicago, 1893, printed as one of your bulletins. On page 438 you will find the statement of facts complained of. As I have never seen these disputed by any authority in the United States I accepted them in good faith. In fact, if the statement is incorrect, what credence can be placed in any of the published reports of papers read at that congress?

In fairness to me I shall esteem it a favor if you will give space in a future issue of the Monthly Weather Review for this refutation.

Will you kindly set me right in regard to Curtis's statement, so that in revised issues of the bulletin "Climate and Meteorology of Australia" the true facts may be given. In the meantime I shall continue to publish my former statement as being based on an authentic official report.

Finally, Mr. Smith, while accusing me of quoting a statement without taking the trouble of verifying it, is self-committed on the face of it of a similar charge, for had he read the three preceding lines of the quotation he would have noticed the following reference: "Curtis, in a paper read before the Meteorological Congress in 1893, sets forth," etc.

I am conscious that no apology is required for bringing the matter under your notice, and at the same time desire to express the assurance that your kind acquiescence in my request will be highly esteemed.

I am, dear colleague, yours faithfully,

(Signed) H. A. HUNT,
Commonwealth Meteorologist.

Prof. WILLIS L. MOORE, LL. D., Sc.D.,

Chief United States Weather Bureau, Washington, D. C.

The above letter was forwarded to Prof. Smith, and his statement appears below:

In the Monthly Weather Review for March, 1911, page 362, the writer, under the head of "A Careless Statement," referred to a paragraph in Climate and Meteorology of Australia, by H. A. Hunt.

The paragraph had reference to the effect of deforestation upon the peach crop in Michigan and northern Kansas, and in connection therewith letters were quoted from officials in both States showing that the facts were not as stated in Mr. Hunt's book.

Mr. Hunt, the Commonwealth meteorologist of Australia, states that his authority was the report of the Meteorological Congress held in Chicago in 1893, page 438. He requests that the implication that any statement would be made in print over his name without emanating from some authentic source of information be refuted in the pages of the Review.

This I hasten to do, and herewith present an apology for such implication. My criticism should have gone beyond Mr. Hunt to the authority that he quoted. Mr. Curtis was writing of cold winds that are injurious to vegetation, and said:

"The low temperatures alone would not prove disastrous, but it is the wind which renders the cold penetrating and destructive. These cold winds are the principal enemy of the tender peach and determine the limit of its successful cultivation. A remarkable example of their effect is to be found in the climatic history of Michigan, where a half century ago peach trees flourished and were rarely injured by the cold; but after the lumberman began his work of deforestation, Dakota blizzards made greater and greater inroads into the State, the tender peach trees were killed along their path, and now the peach crop has nearly disappeared. From the same cause the attempt to grow peaches in northern Kansas has been largely abandoned. * * *

Mr. Hunt's paragraph to which my article referred reads:

"In Michigan, United States of America, where half a century ago peach trees flourished and were rarely injured by the cold, the crops have now nearly disappeared, owing to the removal by timbermen of the shelter afforded by the forests. In northern Kansas, too, from the same cause, the growing of peaches has been largely abandoned."

The present writer must confess that he did not notice the reference to Mr. Curtis's paper in the lines immediately preceding the paragraph quoted from Mr. Hunt's book, and he regrets the intimation that Mr. Hunt's authority was some unsupported magazine or newspaper article.

At the same time it seems to the writer that the statement of Mr. Curtis was incorrectly used to support an argument against deforestation. As is well known by people at all familiar with conditions in the Missouri Valley, and as was so well stated in the letter from the secretary of the Kansas State Horticultural Society, there were never any forests in northern Kansas to be cut off.

As to the reliability of Mr. Curtis's statement, I can only refer again to the letters published with the article in the March Review. The secretary of the Kansas State Horticultural Society makes plain that there are a large number of peach trees successfully grown in northern Kansas.

The head of the department of horticulture of the Michigan Agricultural College is very emphatic also in saying that while there are not so many peaches grown in that State as formerly, the cause is not from deforestation, but because of soil exhaustion and the spread of serious diseases, with the lack of attention to these diseases. He says that in many cases where the proper attention is given to all details of peach production the reward is just as fine a crop as ever was obtained.

The letters from Messrs. Eustace and Wellhouse are reproduced herewith.

(Signed) J. WARREN SMITH,
Professor of Meteorology.

Letter from H. J. Eustace, Division of Horticulture, Michigan Agricultural College Experiment Station, East Lansing, Mich., February 21, 1911.

It is true that peaches are not so extensively raised in the southern part of Michigan as they were some 25 years ago, but the reason is not the one that is given in the quotation in your letter by any means. The real reason is soil exhaustion, the coming of serious diseases like the peach yellows and little peach, and the spread of the San Jose scale.

The old peach orchardists who could produce a crop in a very easy way are not willing to give them the care and attention now necessary to produce a crop. However, there are many cases where the proper attention to all the details of the peach production are given, and the reward is a fine crop, just as fine as was ever obtained.

Letter from Walter Wellhouse, secretary Kansas State Horticultural Society, Topeka, Kans., February 20, 1911.

Your letter to Mr. Coburn, in regard to peach growing in northern Kansas, was handed this department for reply.

In order to give you an idea of the extent to which peaches are grown in northern Kansas, we present a statement of the number of bearing peach trees now growing in some of the northern counties, as follows: Atchison, 43,327; Brown, 57,876; Clay, 48,124; Cloud, 63,027; Doniphan, 58,541; Jackson, 56,151; Jewell, 221,269; Marshall, 81,487; Nemaha, 71,124; Pottawatomie, 40,158; Washington, 93,128; total, 884,222 peach trees.

Forests have not been extensively cut in northern Kansas in the recollection of its oldest inhabitants, because no such forests existed. There are many more trees now growing in this part of our State than were there 50 years ago, the result of plantings of the inhabitants. Mr. Hunt is certainly mistaken in his statements as regards peach growing in northern Kansas.